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SUBJECT: Text of PM Odinga's CSIS Speech

Summary and Text

¶1. (U) Below is the text of Prime Minister Odinga's June 17 speech at the Center for Strategic International Studies. The speech was delivered at CSIS' Statesman's Forum during Odinga's June visit to Washington. End summary.

¶2. (U) Begin Text.

PRIME MINISTER RAILA ODINGA: Thank you. Thank you so much, Mr. President, for those very, very kind words. He has said that he was in Nairobi at the time when President Kenyatta died, the time when Nairobi was referred to as the city in the sun, before it became Nairoboddy. Well now, we really want to make it - take it back to the way it used to be.

Let me begin by just introducing a few of my colleagues who have been here this morning with me: Honorable Yusuf Haji, who is the minister for defense, Kenya - Honorable Ali Mwakwere, who is the minister for transport - Honorable Omingo Magara, assistant minister for trade - Honorable George Thuo, one of the co-chief whips in parliament - Honorable Jakoyo Madiwo, also a co-chief whip, parliament - Ambassador Oginga Ogego - and of course, we have Mike Ranneberger, who is the U.S. ambassador to Kenya.

I want to say that I am very pleased to have the opportunity to address this very distinguished audience here. I should like to begin by expressing, on behalf of the government and the people of Kenya, our most sincere appreciation for the import and necessity of role played by the United States of America in helping us to resolve the problems that we have all of this year. Our especial thanks go to the Secretary of State, Dr. Condoleezza Rice, Assistant Secretary of State Dr. Jendayi Frazer; Congressman Donald Payne who, as chairman of the House Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Africa, led the congressmen and women and senators in championing the cause of democracy in Kenya; and Senator Feingold as well as the U.S. Ambassador to Kenya, Mike Ranneberger.

These distinguished Americans, together with other members of the international community, principally the United Kingdom, the European Union, the United Nations, and the African Union, and together with a mission team that was led by the former Secretary-General of the U.N. Dr. Kofi Annan, together with the retired President of the Republic of Tanzania Benjamin Mkapa and Madam Graga Machel of South Africa, brokered a peace agreement in Kenya that led to the signing of the nation accord on February 28th this year, and the subsequent formation of the grand coalition government in April, this year; actually, to be precise, on the 17th of April this year. Today is the 17th of June, so the grand coalition government in Kenya is exactly 60 days old today.

The soul-searching we went through on our journey to that point, the sacrifices and compromises that had to be made, and the need to address Kenya's sense of being wronged and the unresolved grievances all made for a delicate balancing act. We had to make many difficult, perhaps unpopular decisions along the way. In this, we

had the inestimable support of the civil society and the religious groups, and of sections of the media. Most of all, we had the patience and the hope of our fellow countrymen and women to sustain us. In the end, Kenyans cried from the heart only for their beloved country to be saved.

Following this peace agreement, a grand coalition government was formed, as I've said. And this is a government that has pursued an equal power-sharing between two political parties; that is the Orange Democratic Movement, which I represent, and the Party of National Unity, which is led by President Kibaki. The Orange Democratic Movement, or the ODM, is the largest parliamentary party, while the Party of National Unity is itself an alliance of several other, smaller parties. A constitutional amendment, an act of parliament subsequently entrenched the constitution, created the post of the prime minister in the executive structure. The role of the prime minister is the coordination and supervision of the functions of government, including those of ministries. So in other words, the prime minister has got executive powers.

With the formation of this new government, Kenya entered a period of national transition and a coalition whose primary purpose is to establish a constitutional land, legal, economic, and institutional reforms of such depth that Kenyans and the world will never again have to watch in horror as the nation finds itself nearly destroyed by the kind of chaos which we experienced earlier this year. No doubt you wondered, along with much of the rest of the world, how Kenya, long known as an oasis of peace and stability in a region plagued by a history of conflict, could in a matter of weeks launch into an abyss of turbulence and mayhem normally as suited with failed states. It made Kenya realize that they actually lived a lie, that Kenya was an unstable nation. It used to be said that we are an island of peace in a sea of turmoil, and they would side other countries; they'd look at Rwanda, look at Uganda, look at Somalia, look at Ethiopia, and so on and so forth. But they did not know that what you are seeing was just a facade, and that below it Kenya was no different from these other states.

But for those of us who are constantly looking beneath that facade, popular dissent foiled by long-held land budgets that have never been addressed, by revolt against perpetual poverty against regional development disparities, and huge inequalities that characterize Kenyan society, leaving more than half of the population without adequate shelter, education, health care, social services, and employment opportunities, was always simmering, only requiring a trigger of sufficient magnitude to bring the people's latent anger bubbling to the surface.

Spontaneous protests broke out immediately. The presidential election results were announced via the nation's television screens. The people's eyes had been glued on television screens for three consecutive days. As the results had been announced, then all of a sudden live broadcast was banned and therefore, no more announcements were being made on the screens. But people there waited until the electoral commission announced what were supposed to be purported results.

The response the announcement engendered eventually grew into something more besides, an expression of the people's deeply felt anger, but all historical injustices. More than 1,500 people died in the ensuing violence, many of them felled by police bullets, and over 350,000 people fled their homes. In an orgy of pent-up emotion, disparate need, hunger, and exhaustion, neighbor turned upon neighbor. People who had lived peacefully for decades and who, today, in the process of rehabilitation, are learning how to be peaceful neighbors once again.

But the disputed presidential result was, in fact, only the final act in a long drama surrounding the election. Central in this drama was the role of the body that governed elections, the electoral commission of Kenya or, as its known, ECK. One of the proposals in a constitution of Kenya amendment bill that never saw the light of the day, last year, before the elections, addressed the fundamental issues regarding the formation of the electoral commission of Kenya; issues that, had they been addressed earlier, would have averted the kind of disaster that struck Kenya following last year's elections. Key electoral areas that urgently require reform are the mode of appointment of the electoral commissioners, the independence of the

electoral commission, and the source of the commission's funding. Lack of recognition in these vital areas led to a situation where the ECK, as it was composed last year, was not independent and was not, therefore, constitutionally capable of being impartial. This reform is a crucial component of the overhaul that is required across Kenya's entire legislation.

And at the heart of this is a vein of need that runs through the country's constitutional framework, in the addressing of the balance of power, between the executive and all other arms of government, including the judicial; the overwhelming need of a restructuring of institutions of government in order to ensure transparency and accountability in the public life, and result in good governance. A slew of amendments over the four decades since independence has left us with a patched constitution that invests in the excessive power in determining the nation's life. Over the years, there have been several amendments to the independent constitution which has removed power from the periphery to the center, so that the institution of the presidency has come to emasculate all other institutions of governance. That is why one of the first promises of the grand coalition government of Kenya is a new constitution by April of next year.

In the meantime, the travesty that recently blighted our nation must be addressed, and part of a nation accord involves the establishment of several commissions of inquiry into what went wrong. One of these commissions is called the Kriegler commission, Kriegler that is led by Justice Kriegler from South Africa. He's investigating specifically the conduct of the electoral commission of Kenya, with particular regard to the disputed presidential elections. Besides seeing representations from the party's concerns, the Kriegler commission is currently taking soundings across the country, from Kenyans of all walks of life. A second commission is called the Justice Waki (ph) commission, is investigating the post-election violence, and a third commission, yet to be operationalized, will be the commission on truth, justice, and reconciliation.

Another important piece of legislation, that is a bill dealing with money laundering, is about to be brought before parliament. Terrorism and human rights violations are all matters of grave importance. The Kenyan government has instituted an investigation into allegations of torture in the Mount Elgon region, and the report is to be delivered shortly. In Nairobi, we are about to mark the 10th anniversary of the bombing of the U.S. embassy in our capital city as a somber event that throws into sharp relief the continuing need for international cooperation in this field.

And, as you know, there are very many Kenyans who lost their lives in that incident. On the side of the economy, we have just this month launched the Vision 2030 blueprint, a blueprint of our nation's development that is anchored on three pillars and which has taken us exactly a month since the swearing in of that other government to come up with a blueprint because we had a coalition of three major parties which have their own manifestos. There was a need to set up a taskforce to harmonize these three manifestos into one. But, last week, on Tuesday, we launched the blueprint and the Vision 2030. And on Thursday, the first budget was read by the minister for finance.

This blueprint rests on three pillars: the economic, social, and political reform. And it's designed to facilitate Kenya's journey, the second-world status, within the next 22 years. Medium-term strategic plans for the coming five years are being coordinated by my office. We aim to have an informal consultative group within the nation of partners in the next two months and are planning a series of investor conference, the first to take place in Nairobi in September and others later in both the U.S. and also in Europe. The office of the prime minister is crucial in laying the groundwork for a better Kenya. The office itself is a new institution and therefore requires capacity creation to ensure its effective functioning. We are grateful to have received a pledge from his Excellency, the U.S. ambassador to Kenya, of 500,000 U.S. dollars in order to develop the capacity of the office to be able to coordinate and serve with functions of the government including dealing with issues such as corruption, inefficiency, justice, et cetera.

But, to do this, of course, the costs will be much higher. We already find ourselves with a bloated cabinet that must be funded.

And people have actually criticized this cabinet. Many have criticized, but it was an unavoidable result of the particular multiparty that makes up President Kibaki's Party of National Unity. Because of its size, it was decided that the cabinet would function more efficiently if business were conducted primarily in committees. Five of these committees have been formed, namely, one on infrastructure, finance and administration, social services, and productive sector and security. And, of those five committees, the president shares one on security and I chair the other four, the remaining four committees.

The electoral and social crisis we experienced has badly damaged our economy. And our growth rate might sadly not reach early expectations. It is projected that as a result of the post-election crisis, the GDP growth will drop this year to 4.5 percent, from 7 percent of last year. The situation is made worse by the rapidly rising cost of oil and the world food crisis. The crisis and resulting insecurity and the disbursement of hundreds of thousands of Kenyans meant many crops were not planted in time nor have the rains been kind to us this year.

The result - we face a very difficult 12 months ahead. While trying to ensure the safety and food security of our people, we also have to deliver the promised institutional and constitutional reform. The coalition government, in itself, is a new concept. It is for the first time that on the African continent we have a grand coalition government. So this is a pioneering experiment. It will demand many decisions along the way that arise simply from the newness of its own structure. It will require a supreme effort of coordination to ensure transparency and accountability where none existed before. In the midst of this, we must address urgent economic problems, taking steps to limit inflation, to attract foreign investment, and to get our foreign exchange annals such as tourism back on track.

It is a daunting agenda, but I'm optimistic of our success. The people of Kenya have demonstrated their determination to pursue what is right for this country through democratic means and through holding their leaders to account. The people of America have done it over and over again. We hope to take inspiration from the experiences of our international partners. In doing so, President Kibaki and I are aware that we cannot do everything overnight. It is the nature of people to look for flaws and rifts and disagreements and the extreme politicization of our media and of our people in Kenya means that the contentious issues are bound to arise in a coalition such as ours, embracing, as it does, so very many different shades of opinion that must be harmonized by patience and compromise, sometimes assume unwarranted magnitude.

It is vital for us and our development partners to understand that President Kibaki and I are equally and similarly determined that, together, as a partnership, we shall lead our nation forward to the place where we all want to be. My appeal to you today is that you remain strong partners of my country in our hour of its greatest need. Americans on both sides of your political divide have proved invaluable friends to Kenya and we hope whoever you elect as president later this year will maintain a strong focus on Africa and on Kenya, in particular.

Kenya and the U.S. have enjoyed a powerful relationship dating back to many years. As the prime minister of Kenya, I am determined to ensure that this relationship continues and is strengthened through shared democratic and social values and through the development of a vibrant partnership, all facilitated by the hand of friendship and cooperation extended on both sides. We remember with fond nostalgia the days when hundreds and thousands of Kenyans came to the United States for studies in a program that was called "airlift," which was spearheaded by the late President John F. Kennedy and the late Thomas Joseph Mboya of Kenya.

So the USA has enjoyed a historical relationship with Kenya, assisting Kenya to obtain its independence from colonialism and, since then, we've enjoyed cordial relationship in economic and social, cultural, and even security fields. We'd like to see these relations strengthened and expanded. And as this new grand coalition government - as I've said, this is an experiment; this is a first on the African continent. No country in Africa has had a coalition government. Africa is moving from a phase of single-party, no-party military rules to democratic government. You will see the success in

other fields, the reversions in other places, but, generally, we are moving forward; as some would say, two steps forward, one step backwards. We are advancing. So I believe that what we have achieved in Kenya can be used as a model to be followed in other African countries that are in transition.

What we are seeing in Zimbabwe is not very pleasing. And I have spoken about this openly before and I've been censored, but I have no regret in repudiating again here. Zimbabwe is an eyesore, an embarrassment to the African continent, an example of how not to do it in Africa. And it is sad that many African heads of state are quiet when the disaster is looming in Zimbabwe. There is no point in letting Mugabe proceed with a repeat of an election when nobody knows how many votes were cast in the last elections. How many registered voters do you have in Zimbabwe? How many votes did Mugabe get? How many votes did Tsvangirai get? We are only being told 48 percent against 43 percent - of what?

You cannot organize yourself to face an election when you don't know how you fared in the last one. How many voters did I get in this region? Where am I weak so that I can strengthen myself? It is a complete sham and a farce to Africa. We are determined to show that, in Africa, a country can rise from crisis like Kenya and move toward prosperity. Thank you very much for listening to me.

End text.

RANNEBERGER